EXECUTIVE COUNCIL OF PHYSICAL THERAPY AND OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY EXAMINERS

REPORT ON CUSTOMER SERVICE

1 June 2014

Executive Council of Physical Therapy and Occupational Therapy Examiners

Report on Customer Service

1. Overview

The Executive Council of Physical Therapy and Occupational Therapy Examiners (ECPTOTE) maintains an organizational commitment to providing excellent customer service for all of its client groups. However, accurately measuring the level of service is a challenge due to the "newness" of the concept of measuring satisfaction and inexperience of the staff in creating sampling instruments and analyzing the gathered data. Until FY 2002, our self-evaluated level of performance was all anecdotal and based on individual, client generated opinions. If enough people complained about a process, or the mannerisms of a clerk, to a supervisor or the Executive Director, the process was eventually changed if possible and the clerk was counseled or let go. Otherwise, there was no formal method of measuring just how well we were doing our jobs as viewed by our primary customers – the licensees, or methodology of correctly responding to the faults they pointed out.

2. External Customer Inventory

The Executive Council primarily provides services to the licensees of its two boards' - Physical Therapists and Physical Therapist Assistants, Occupational Therapists and Occupational Therapy Assistants, through licensure to practice. Other related customers are the owners and employees of the Physical Therapy and Occupational Therapy facilities that are registered by the agency. This provision of services supports the agency's Strategy 1. ECPTOTE also provides services to therapists who are not licensed by the agency, potential licensees, and persons enrolled in a therapist education program. This is usually in the form of providing information. Other customers include citizens who file a complaint against one of the agency's licensees. Investigation and disciplinary action against guilty licensees support Strategy 2.

3. General Description and History of Information Gathering Methods

In December 2001, ECPTOTE first contracted with the Center for Social Work Research at the University of Texas (UT) to manage its customer survey. The survey began in January, 2002 with results provided to the agency three times a year. ECPTOTE signed an initial contract for CY 2002, with expectations of continuing the survey process indefinitely. A paper and pencil survey was enclosed with about 70 - 100 licensee renewals every month, and the licensee had the option to either fill out the survey on line on the UT website or return the completed survey with the renewal. The total cost to administer, interpret, and report on the survey results gradually dropped from the initial cost of $1550/year to $750/year, or about $.30/person surveyed.

During the FY2003 budget crisis, the ECPTOTE had its budget significantly reduced in February 2003. One of the many contracts allowed to lapse due to lack of funds was the contract with the Center for Social Work Research. The contract was not renewed until March 2004, when the agency gained discretionary income through its sales of mailing lists. That contract, which continues to date, included the same conditions and cost, but there was almost a one year gap in collecting and compiling survey data. While licensees occasionally filled out the survey on the agency's web site, the data was automatically sent to UT, sight unseen by the agency. Data from those completed surveys were included in the first resumed report. There have been no breaks since, although the time between reports has now extended to once a year, usually in the March/April timeframe.

Due to new processes set up to enhance the use of the online renewal system, the data collection method required modification. The agency now mails out notification postcards instead of a renewal packet (with survey enclosed), thereby precluding the use of mail in distributing surveys. However, the 90% - 95% of the licensee population who use the online renewal program every two years on the agency web site are now exposed to the survey, which is included as part of the online renewal process. Filling out the survey, as always, is voluntary, but the response rate has significantly improved since its inclusion in the renewal process. A much smaller group of respondents access the survey directly from a different area of the agency's website.

The agency is now provided results once a biennium, usually in late April before the strategic plan is due. When it was discovered that written comments were also collected all year and then provided at the same time (In some cases, they were almost a year old), the agency negotiated a modification to the contract, whereby written comments were received monthly. The contract has been further modified so that comments are immediately forwarded to the agency upon submission, allowing an almost immediate response to a comment.

ECPTOTE has made frequent changes to its web site, usually driven by outside requirements or opportunities to enhance the site. A negative consequence of one of those changes is that sometime in 2011, the customer survey was disconnected, and remained so for a lengthy period of time. This problem was not discovered and corrected until April 2012 (when the report was received) – there were 327 responses. This is in contrast to the 2,425 in the previous biennium.

4. Methodology and Analysis of the Survey of Organizational Excellence Group Administered Survey (as described by the Center for Social Work Research):

Overview

Customer service surveys were administered starting in the spring of 2002 by the Survey of Organizational Excellence Group (SOE) at The University of Texas at Austin School of Social Work for the Executive Council on Physical and Occupational Therapy Examiners (ECPTOTE). The survey project intent was to measure customer service perceptions from the recipients of agency services. The data also serve to address the Customer Service Standards Act (1999, SB 1563). This report contains both an overview of the findings and individual item results and analysis. This is followed by a review of the methodology used in the survey administration.

Detailed Survey Methodology

<u>Design</u>

The design process incorporated three objectives. First, the survey created substantive customer service survey data for strategic planning and organizational initiatives. Second, the design accurately portrayed and represented (through use of standard and tested surveying techniques) the perceptions of customers. Lastly, implementing the survey established an open forum in which both the citizens of Texas and the direct recipients of services could evaluate interactions, recognize outstanding service, and/or offer insights into how service was delivered and where service needed to improve.

To accomplish these objectives survey areas or dimensions were created. The dimensions categorized various customer perceptions into distinct units. Categorical distinctiveness allows for an organization to more thoroughly assess whether or not they are meeting or exceeding customer expectations in a given area of operation. Both the quantitative and qualitative data provided through the survey process reaffirms areas of strength and draws attention to potential areas of concern.

Seven survey areas (facilities, staff, communications, Internet site, complaint-handling processes, service timeliness, and printed information) were specifically listed in the Legislative Budget Board's Strategic Planning Instructions derived from the Customer Service Standards Act. However, the planning instructions did allow for agencies to not assess on a particular area if it did not apply to the service delivery function of the agency. For each dimension, the survey participants were asked to respond to various items concerning perceptions of customer service.

The customer perceptions were measured on a Likert-type scale with 5 possible responses (strongly disagree, disagree, neutral, agree, and strongly agree). Point values ranging from 5 for strongly agree to 1 for strongly disagree were assigned upon processing the data. If the respondent had no knowledge or the item did not apply to their situation, they were asked to leave the item blank. The higher the response the more strongly respondents agreed with the statement. All items were positively worded so that higher values are representative of higher levels of agreement or may be viewed as more positive perceptions of customer service.

The survey also included an item asking for the frequency of contact with the agency and an open-ended item. Customers were also asked to identify the customer category that best described themselves. The open-ended item, found at the end of the survey, asked respondents to offer any additional comments and/or to identify outstanding service from employees or divisions. The open-ended section was designed to allow for sources of input (compliments, criticisms or suggestions) not directly addressed in the printed survey items. Moreover, asking customers to recognize individuals who provided outstanding service assists in identifying employees who excel in providing exemplary service to customers. To allow for a rapid response to potential concerns, survey participants were able to mark a box on the online version that immediately forwarded their comments to the agency.

Survey Instrument Type

The survey was an online instrument. Utilizing both HyperText Markup Language (html coding) and Common Gateway Interface (cgi scripting), the survey was first made available via the world wide web at the following Internet address:

www.survey.utexas.edu/ecptote

The equipment used to serve the web site and the corresponding database of responses (a Unix based system) handles thousands of simultaneous requests and performs routine data backups both incrementally and daily. Respondents receiving the OMR version of the survey could take the survey online by going to the web site address and by entering their control number (printed on the survey instrument). In the event a control number entered online was in conflict (the two numbers were the same) with a control number received from a hardcopy survey, the online survey data would be removed as a valid response. For this dataset, there were no conflicting control numbers.

The online survey was incorporated in the agency online renewal system and the design was concise for various reasons. First, the survey served as a general customer service diagnostic that assessed customer perceptions in broad topical areas. While many inferences can be made from the survey data, low scoring areas may require additional assessment to determine underlying causes. Conversely, further examination of high scoring dimensions may produce examples of an organization's "best practices" that can be shared among other parts of the agency. Also, the general nature of the survey enables the agency to use the instrument in different settings; and therefore, the survey results allow for comparison of dimensions across the organization. Second, instruments such as these (voluntary questionnaires of customers) are succinct so that the respondent can complete the survey in only a few minutes. Typically, long questionnaires (due to the specificity of items and considerable length of time to complete the survey) discourage participation. Our experience is that response rates for concise surveys achieve an acceptable returned percentage of greater than 10%. Third, providing survey participants the opportunity to comment in an open-ended section shapes the preparation of follow-up surveys. Customers' suggestions are often used to modify the content of future customer service survey items.

Analysis

Survey responses were compiled and analyzed. For the demographic items, frequency counts and percentage of respondents are tabulated. Furthermore, for each category code such as industry and program, an average score for this item: "Overall, I am satisfied with the service I received." was calculated. This item is a general statement about the agency's customer service performance. Providing these scores for each category permits direct comparisons across the various response options.

For the scaled items (the non-demographic items listed at the bottom of the survey), average scores, number of respondents, standard deviations, and frequency counts of response choices were calculated. The statistical calculation of standard deviation measures variability of responses. The smaller the standard deviation, the closer together the distribution of the respondents' scores are. The greater the standard deviation, the more scores are spread among the responses. Once item averages were calculated, dimensional averages were computed by taking an average of all the mean item responses, which comprised the different dimensions. Open-ended responses were returned in their entirety directly to the agency.

Additional analysis of the survey instrument was conducted. Confidence intervals (set at 95%, the most commonly reported level) were calculated for all scaled items. The level creates an interval (a range around the average item score). This means that you can be 95% confident that the interval contained the average scores for your selected customer sample. Reliability (a consistency measure of the survey instrument) was calculated and had an internal consistency coefficient exceeding the generally accepted value. Sample sizes and anticipated rates of response rate allowed for a (plus/minus) 5 error at the 95% confidence level. Subject research, face validity and factor analysis were used to assure general validity, or in other terms, the survey measured what it intended to measure.

5. Summary of Results:

All results were provided to the agency both in a pdf document sent by e-mail, and in on a disk included with a paper report. Results are now provided exclusively from data collected through the ongoing online assessment process. For the sample surveyed, ECPTOTE has an acceptable response rate. The items were scored on a five-point scale with 5 being "strongly agree" and 1 being "strongly disagree". Overall, the agency had a very positive overall satisfaction rating in FY2013/14 with 75% of the 2,498 respondents stating that overall; they were satisfied with their experience with the agency. Of the remaining respondents, 12% were neutral on this item, 7% disagreed, and 5% entered "strongly disagree". This is a higher overall score than the score in the previous biennium.

The highest scoring items regarded the interaction with staff and information received from the agency. The usefulness and ease of use of the agency web site were the lowest. Individual scores of questions were higher than those of the previous biennium.

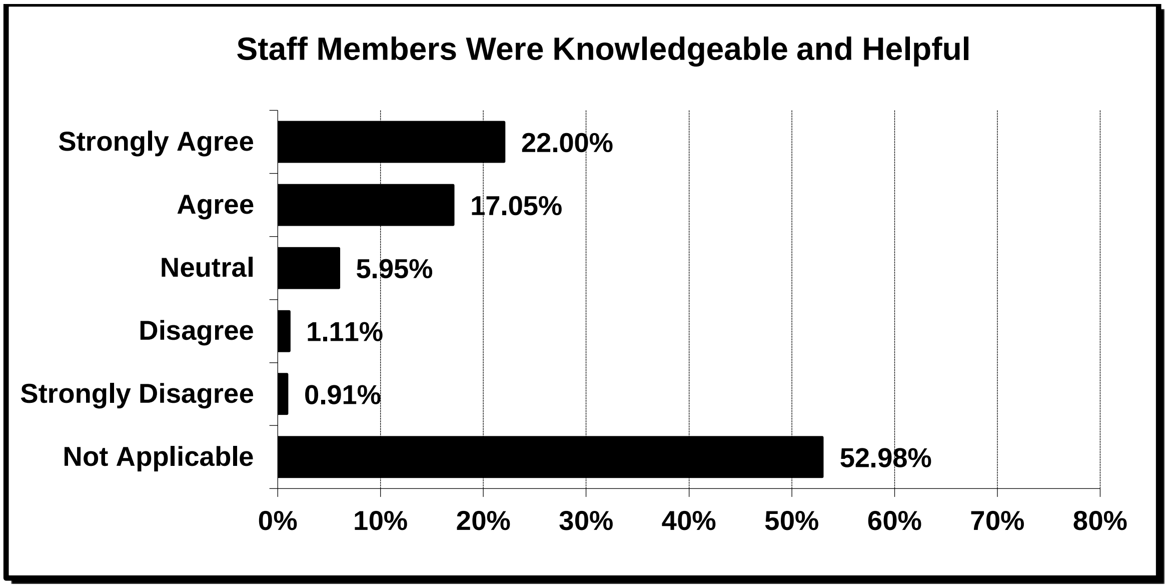
Any survey question with an average (mean) score above the neutral midpoint of "3.0" suggests that respondents perceive the issue more positively than negatively. Scores of "4.0" or higher indicate areas of substantial strength for the organization. Conversely, scores below "3.0" are viewed more negatively by respondents and should be a significant source of concern for the organization and receive immediate attention.

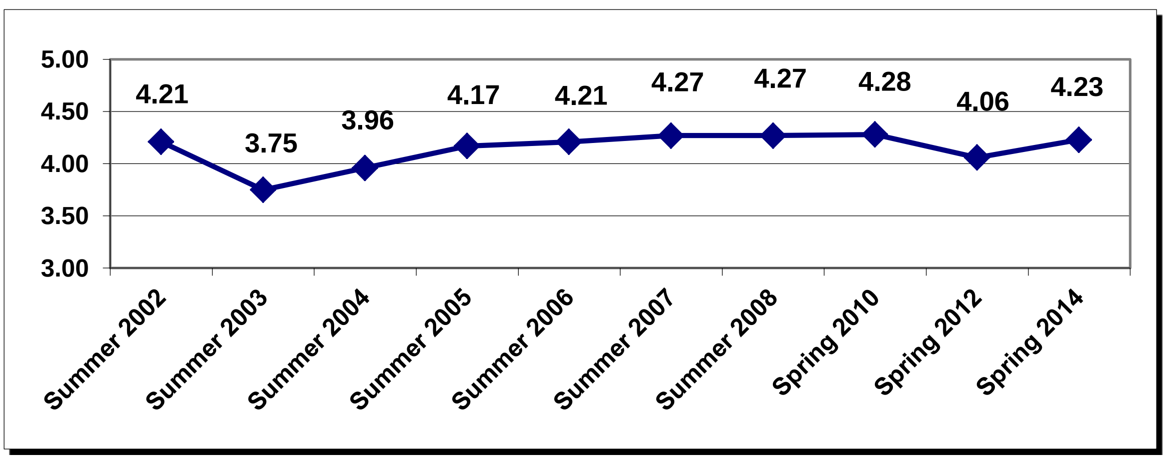
Below are the most recent mean scores of questions from this survey compared to the results reported in the previous Strategic Plan:

Item Number	**Item Descriptor**	**Spring 2012**	**Spring 2014**
1.	Staff members were knowledgeable and helpful.	4.06	4.24
2.	I received the correct information I needed.	4.51	4.29
3.	I received the correct materials I needed.	4.65	4.27
4.	The web site was easy to use and well organized.	4.26	3.69
5.	The web site contained clear and accurate information on events, contact services, and information.	4.19	3.94
6.	If I complained, I believe it would be addressed in a reasonable manner.	3.89	3.94
7.	My telephone call, letter or e-mail inquiry was answered in a reasonable amount of time.	4.00	4.14
8.	Printed brochures or written material provided thorough and accurate information.	4.71	4.11
9.	If I visited the facility, it was clean and orderly.	4.50	4.12
10.	Overall, I am satisfied with my experience.	4.11	3.91
	Total Number of Respondents	327	1,054

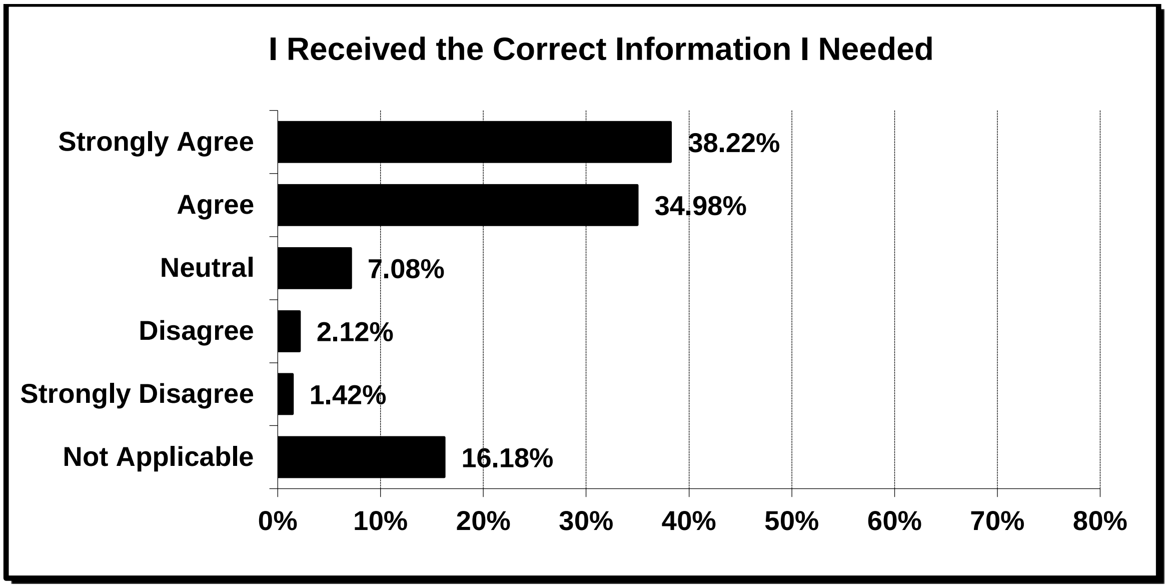
The frequency distribution for each of the 10 questions asked on the latest survey, with associated over-time comparison graph:

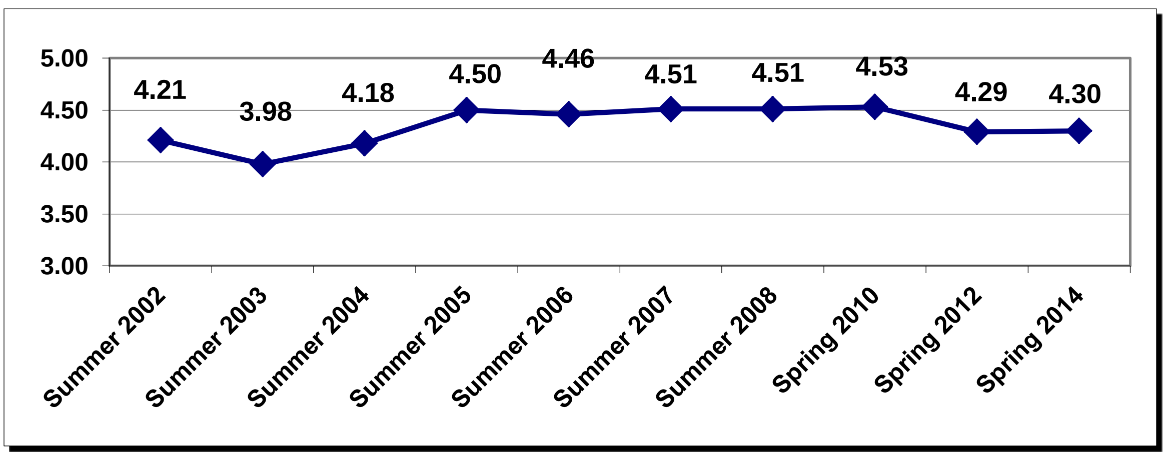
1. Staff members were knowledgeable and helpful.



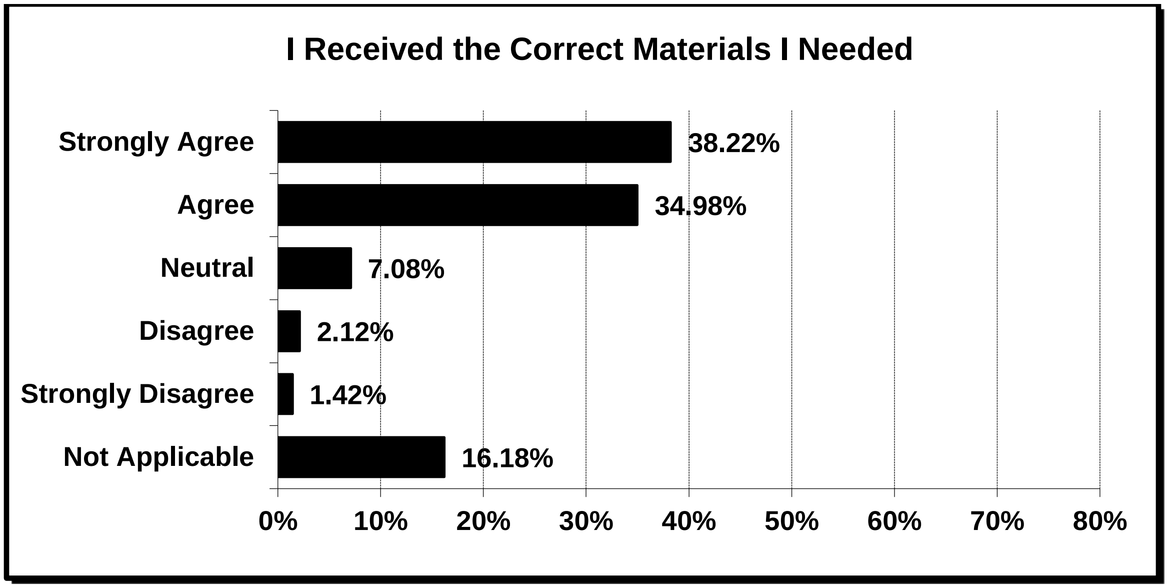


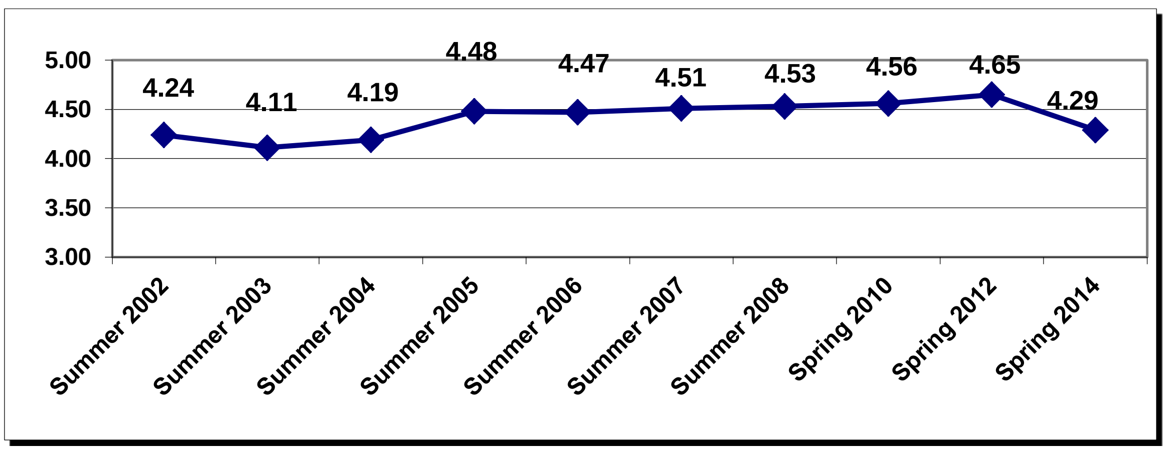
2. I received the correct information I needed.



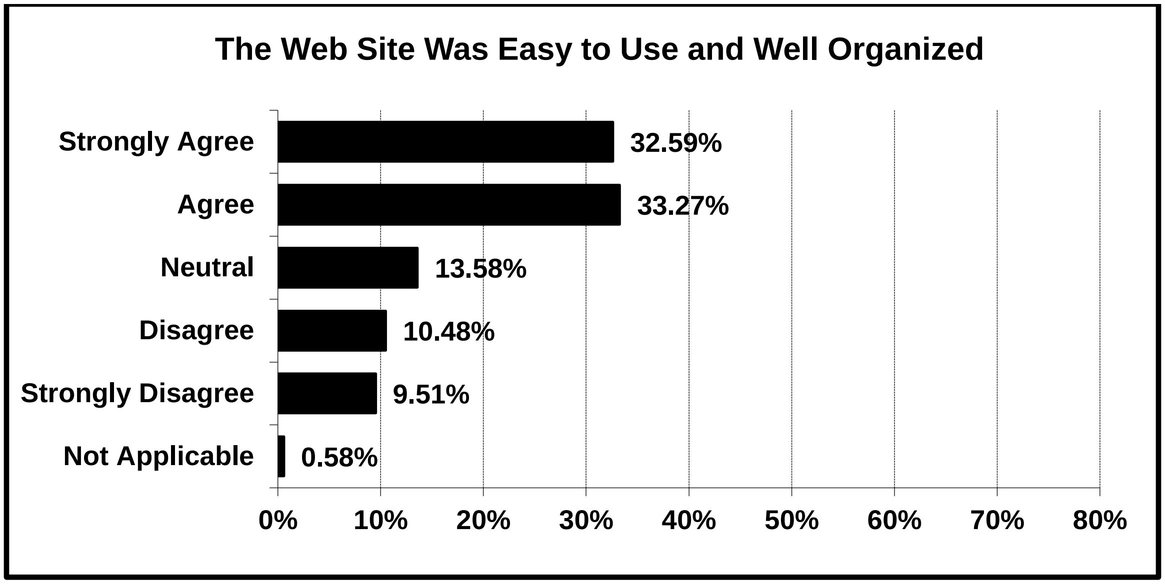


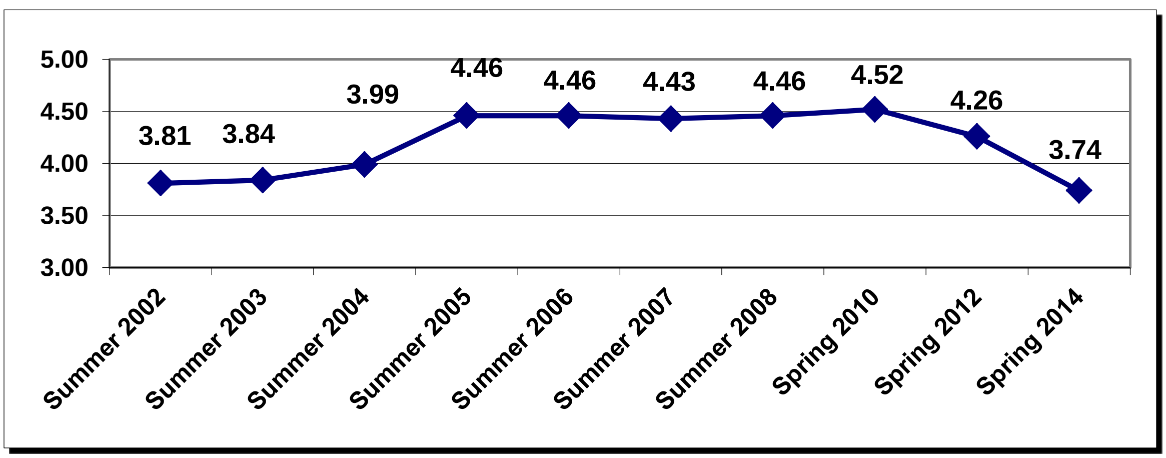
3. I received the correct materials I needed.



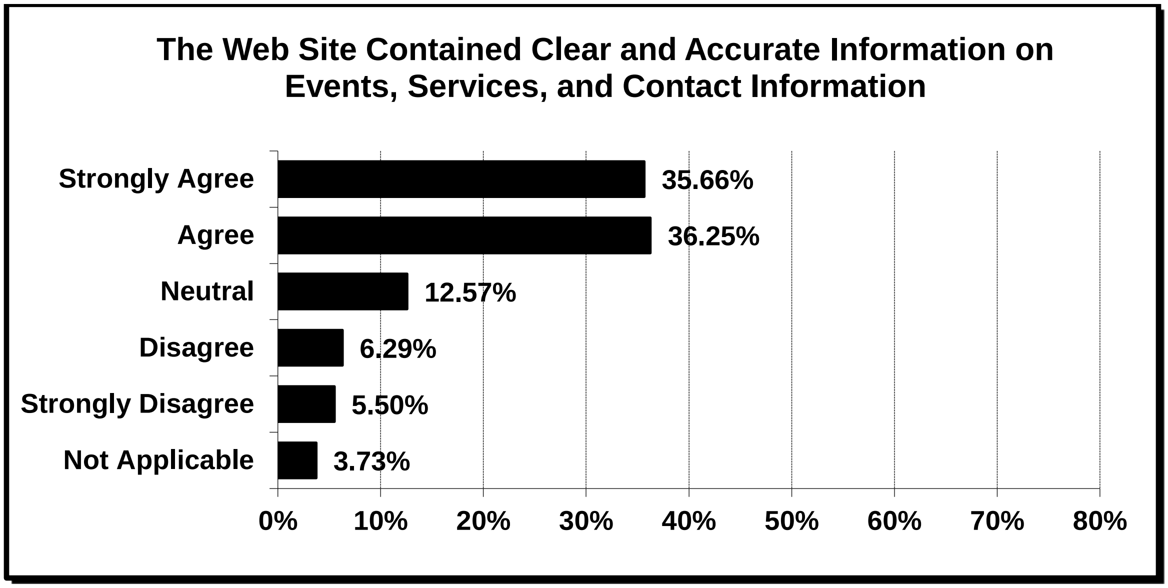


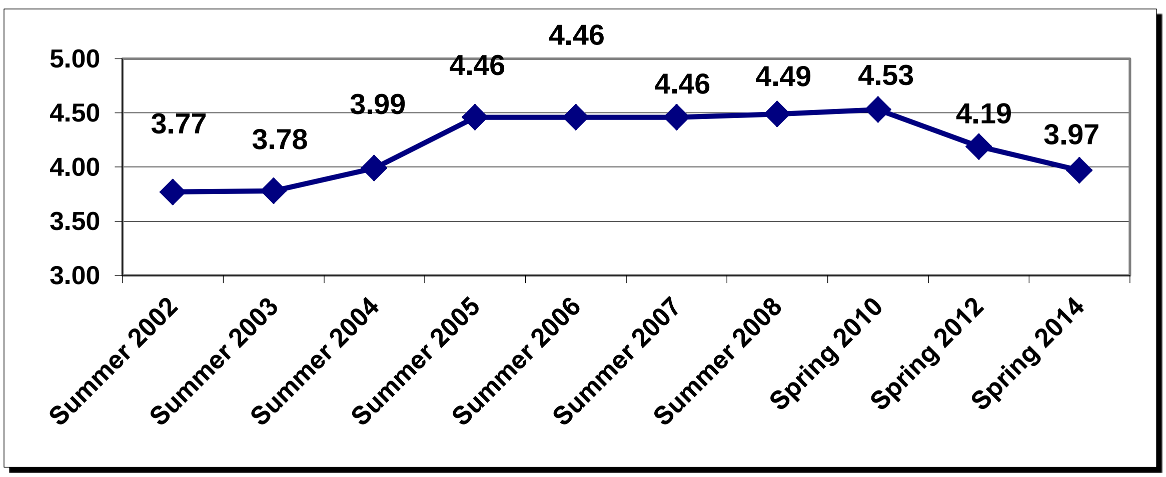
4. The web site was easy to use and well organized.



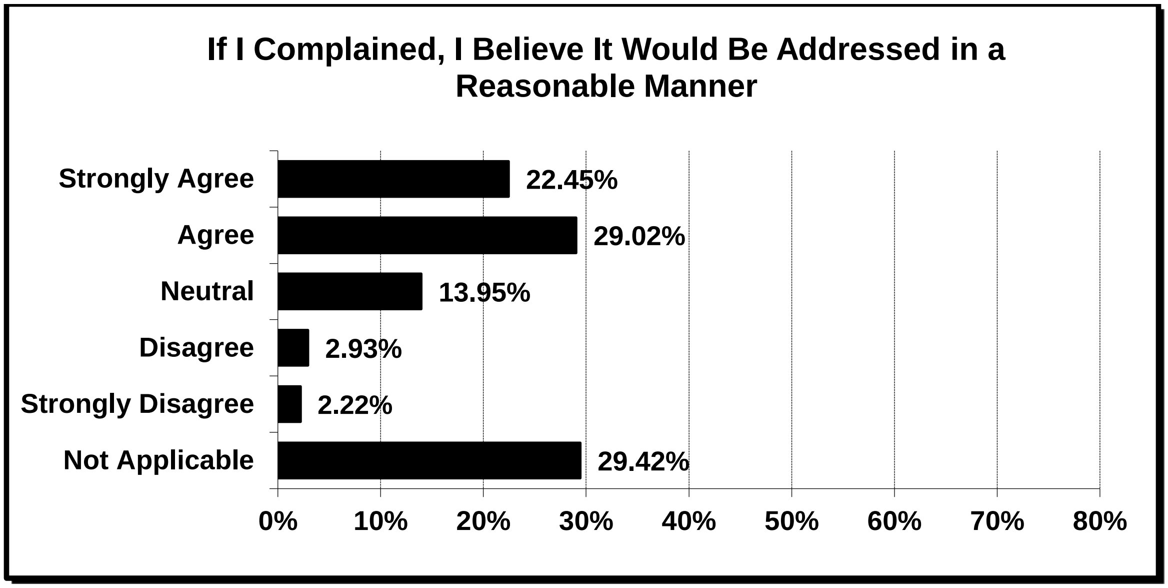


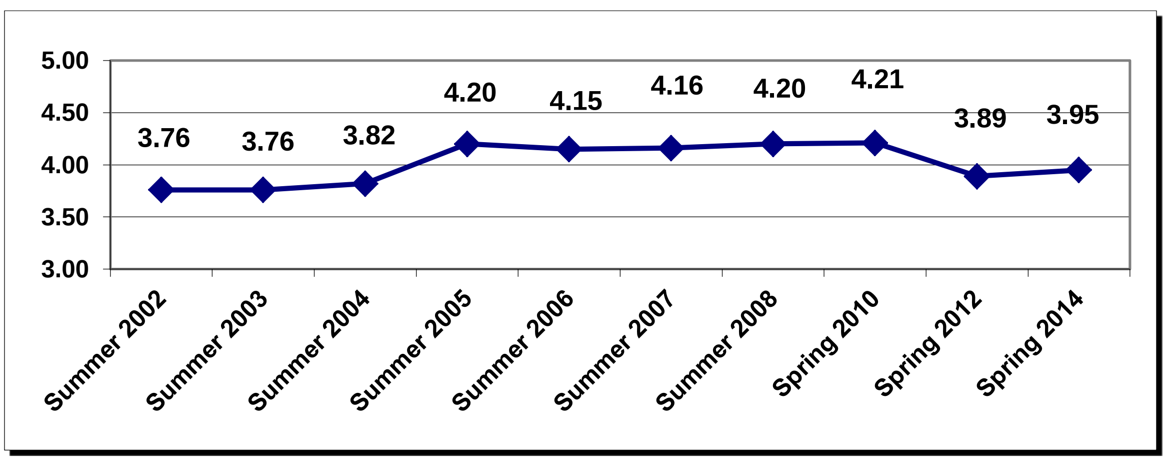
5. The web site contained clear and accurate information on events, contact services, and information.



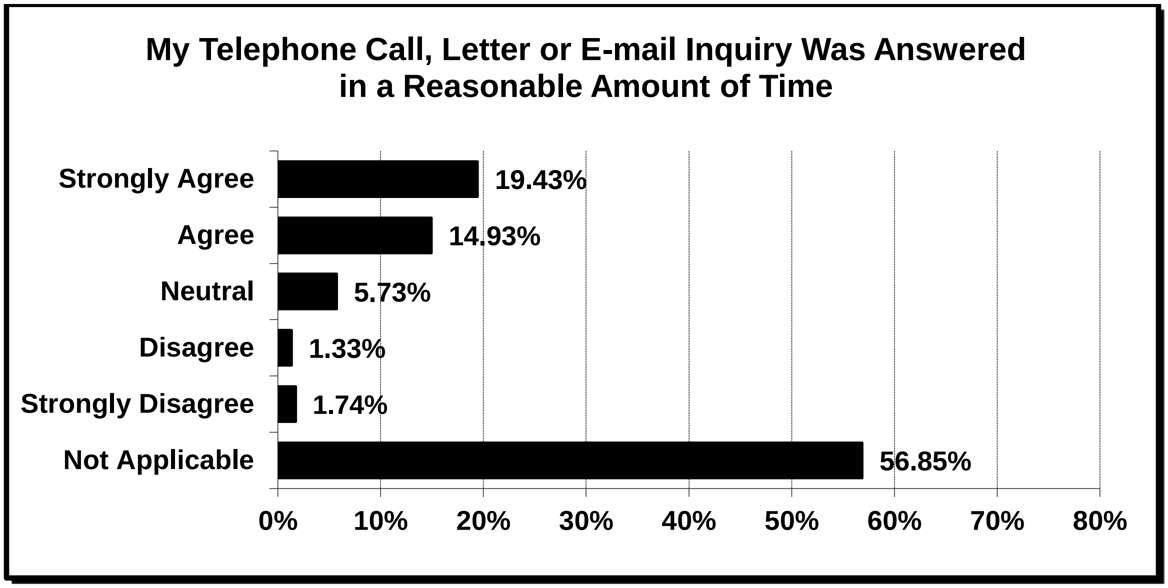


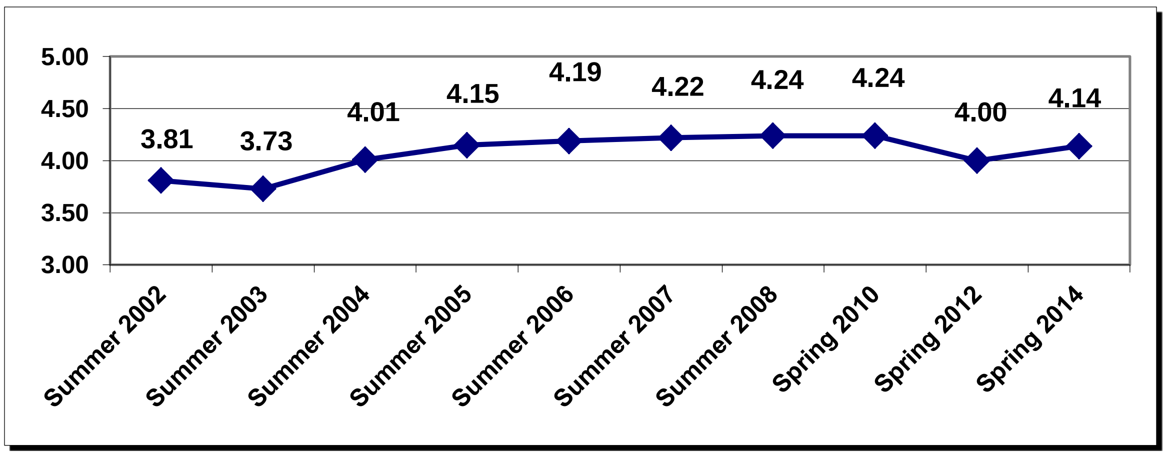
6. If I complained, I believe it would be addressed in a reasonable manner.



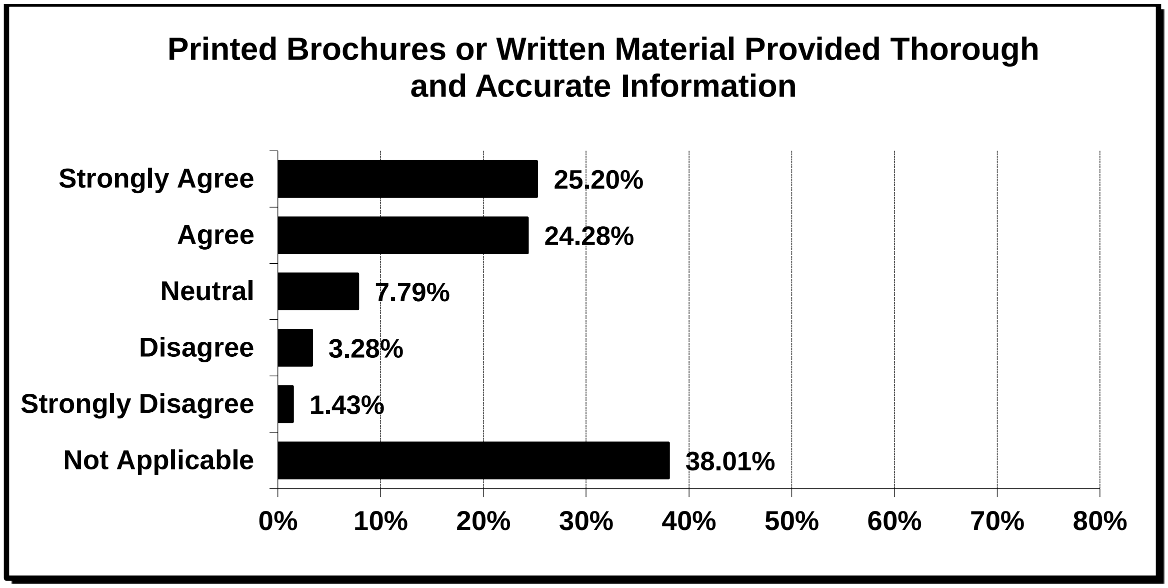


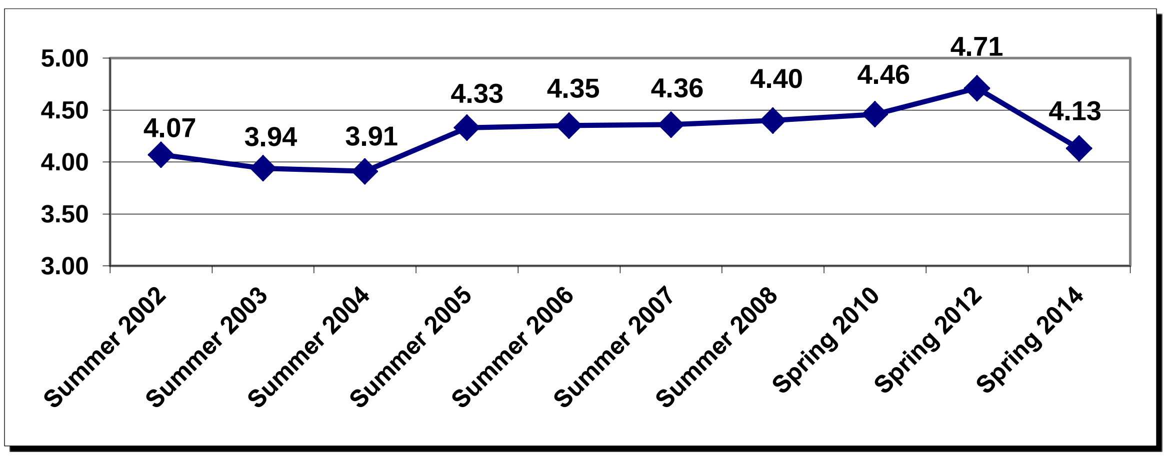
7. My telephone call, letter or e-mail inquiry was answered in a reasonable amount of time.



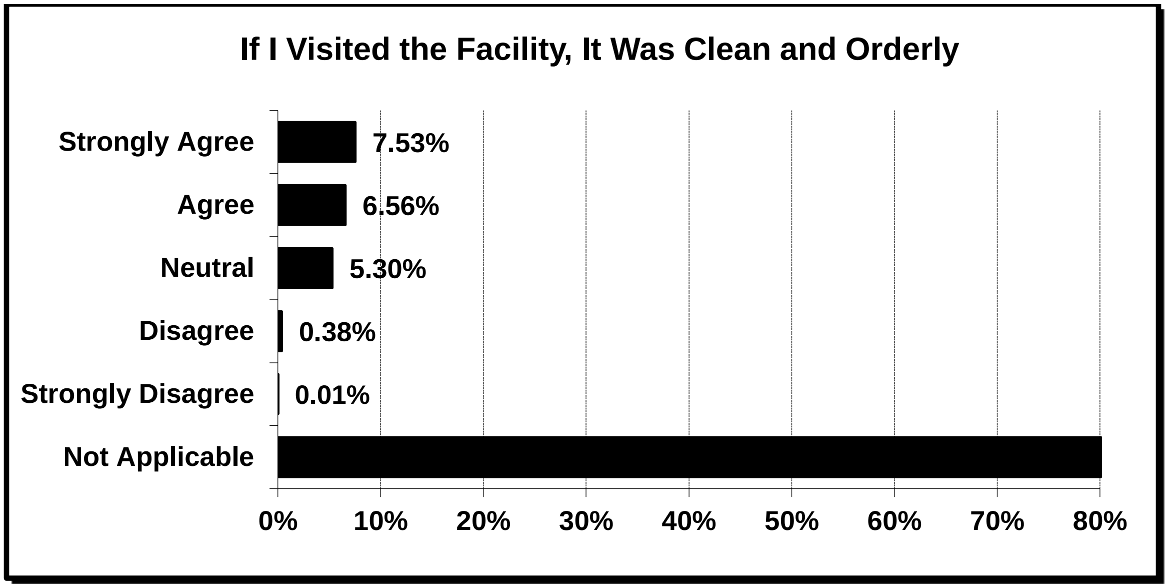


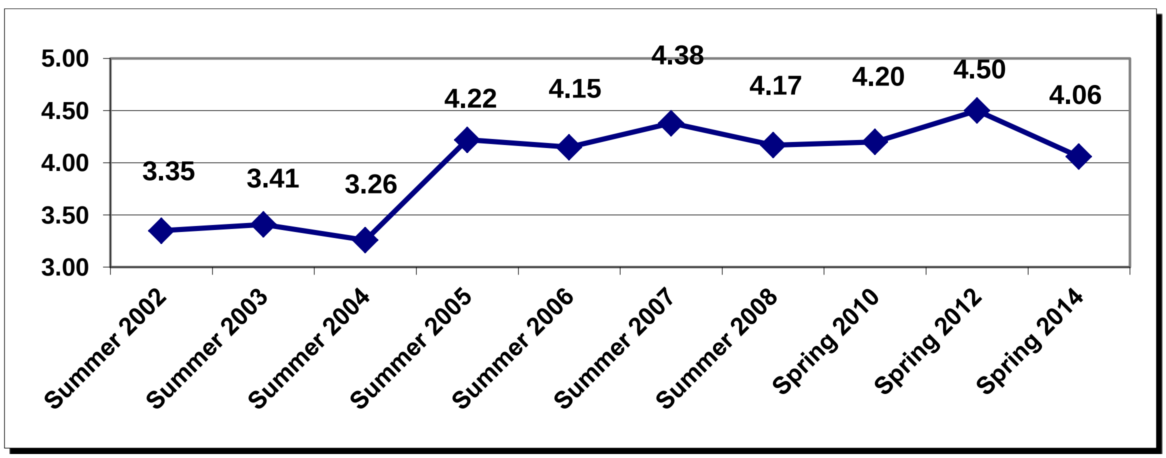
8. Printed brochures or written material provided thorough and accurate information.



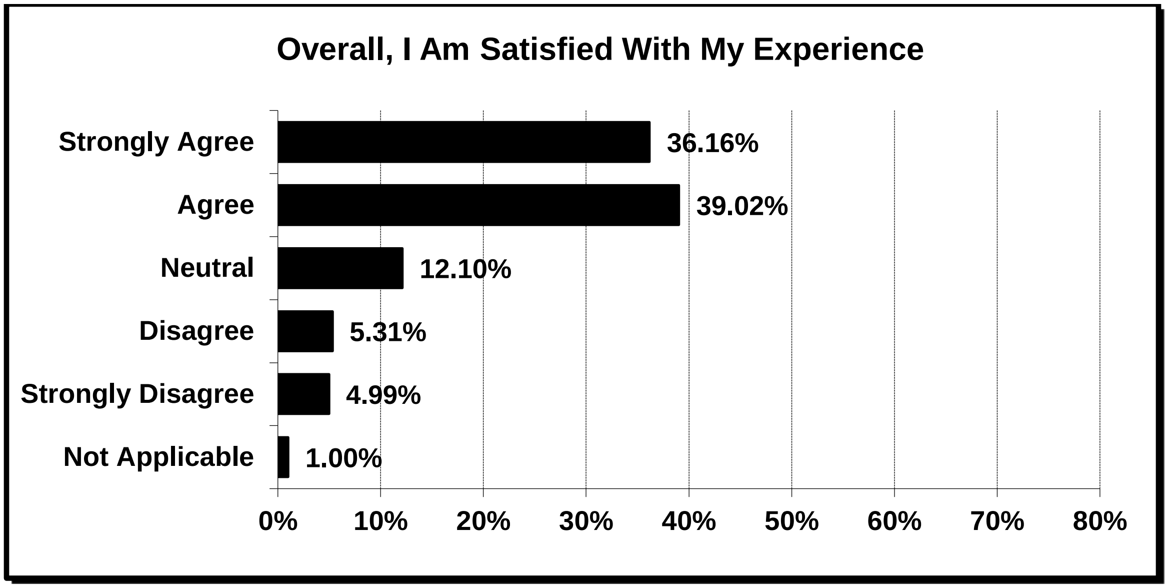


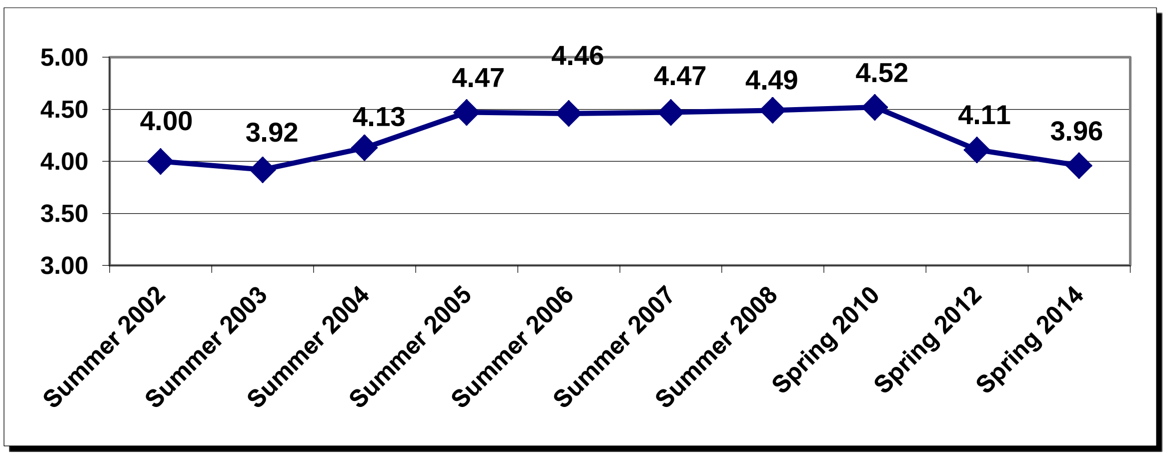
9. If I visited the facility, it was clean and orderly.





10. Overall, I am satisfied with my experience.





<u>Customer Assessment Strategy</u>

Continuous assessment of the opinions of customers is used by most industries and is a growing concern for state government. The assessment does not have to be costly or time consuming. The following recommendations were made to ECPTOTE to effectively conduct ongoing customer service assessment.

- Maintain a prominently displayed link from the agency's internet home page to the online customer service assessment. The online assessment is easily maintained, modifiable, and cost effective. This type of assessment is available at all times.
- Build the database capability to store email addresses so that customers can be invited to assess the agency via the internet. This type of assessment can be done twice a year.

- Include a customer service survey in all outgoing request for printed information. This will allow the customer to assess the agency based on the service they had just received.
- Once a year conduct a random sample or 100% poll of the customer base.

6. Agency Corrective Actions

Results can vary depending on which questions are asked and how they are asked. The UT survey, which was a refinement of the original agency survey, has provided far better information to the agency concerning the major focus areas of customer service than its internally developed survey. We have a good feel for our weaknesses and strengths, but right now are using the anecdotal information obtained from survey comments to make needed changes to agency operations.

In the past, we had several major issues on which we could focus our efforts. These issues were obvious, and usually had workable solutions. We have made those corrections through the years, and we now find ourselves with only issues and solutions that would require a major effort and significant funding to implement, e.g., creating a true interactive web site. Until we find those resources, we are forced to take some "small ball" steps.

Our efforts in improving customer service are focused on the written feedback given by those taking the survey. A major problem solved gradually, was to arrange to receive written feedback first monthly, and then as it arrives at UT. When we received the written copy of the customer survey each May, we also received a years' worth of comments. It proved very embarrassing having to respond to someone's "please contact me" request almost a year later! Which led to the next initiative.

When we receive the written comments from those leaving feedback and who expressed a concern, the two board coordinators contacted everyone who left a phone number or email address or even just a name. There have been a large number of these over the past few years, and the coordinators have responded to every one of them. In this way, we were able to solve problems or answer questions in a one-on-one manner. The only problem to this is when someone makes a comment to which we would normally respond, but they fail to identify themselves! Following is the rollup of comments received during the past year:

Compliment	Complaint	Suggestion	Request
50	130	115	15

The lowest scored item was for the first time, not related to customer service, but the two questions directly addressing the agency web site. As a counterpoint, direct customer service items all had significant upticks. Two years ago, the items related to customer service were falling; prompting us to take steps to correct this potential problem. It was addressed in staff meetings, through prompt correction to those employees perceived not acting correctly in outside communications, and making courtesy an item on employee evaluations. Improvements over time are noted in this area based on the survey feedback, but even one annoyed customer is one too many.

The web site issue is probably caused by the "aging" of the web site. It is a very plain looking/utilitarian site and required some improvements to the basic services it provided. During the winter of 2013/4, the web site was rewritten to incorporate some necessary security changes, and additional services to licensees. However, due to financial limitations, the overall basic design did not change. Under those circumstances, we hope that we have at least slowed the decline in the approval ratings for the two web site items.

7. Future Planned Assessments

During the remainder of calendar year 2014, and as long as funds are available, the Executive Council plans to continue to contract with the Center for Social Work Research to survey the attitudes and opinions of our customers who renew their license on line, and maintain a link on its web home page to the survey for access by everyone else. The product provided us the last several years has not been up to the same level of quality as it was prior. We will have to monitor their performance in this upcoming biennium as well as insure there are no problems with data collection on the agency web site.

8. Customer Service Performance Measures

Measure						
Outcome	**FY2012**	**FY2013**	**FY2014 (est.)**	**FY2015 (est.)**	**FY2016 (est.)**	**FY2017 (est.)**
% of Surveyed Customer Respondents Expressing Overall Satisfaction w/ Services Received	74%	76%	78%	80%	82%	84%
% of Surveyed Customer Respondents Identifying Ways to Improve Service Delivery	2%	2%	2%	2%	2%	2%
Output						
# of Customers Surveyed	327	1,444	1,054	1,600	1,650	1,700
# of Customers Served	35,527	37,831	39,000	40,000	41,000	42,000
Efficiency						
Cost per Customer Surveyed	$0.30	$0.29	$0.32	$0.28	$0.27	$0.26
Explanatory						
# of Customers Identified	35,527	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]
# of Customer Groups Inventoried	3	3	3	3	3	3

9. Compact with Texans

The Executive Council, the Texas Board of Physical Therapy Examiners, and the Texas Board of Occupational Therapy Examiners will hold faithfully to the highest standards of ethics, accountability, efficiency, and openness in all its dealings with the public. We will demonstrate to the public and those we regulate the sincerity of our desire to license and regulate consistently, fairly, and sensibly, while keeping the health and welfare of people receiving services from our licensees as our driving concern.

As one of our customers, there are certain standards of service you should expect, and demand from us.

To treat you with courtesy and respect.
To provide you with timely and responsive service.
To give you clear and accurate information – the first time.
To follow through on our commitments to you.

We basically perform three services for our customers – license qualified applicants, enforce the PT and OT practice acts, and provide assistance and general information. These three services are sometimes intertwined, but we address them separately in this Compact.

Licensing

We are the only entity in Texas with the legal authority to license physical therapists, physical therapist assistants, occupational therapists, and occupational therapy assistants, and to register the facilities in which those services are provided.

We continuously look for ways to improve our administrative procedures so that, without sacrificing any assurance that the people we license are well qualified to provide services, we also satisfy the need of applicants and licensees to receive licenses and renewal certificates quickly. Although we consistently achieve license and renewal processing times well under established standards, we continue to look for ways to improve the efficiency and accuracy of our all of our administrative procedures. If you have questions about the licensing process or wish to apply for licensure in one of these professions, please contact our office at (512) 305-6900. We have posted information about licensing requirements and procedures on our web site (http://www.ptot.texas.gov), but to avoid processing delays, and ensure that you get the right application and instructions, we ask that you request an application on the “Forms by Mail” web page or call us and ask for one.

When you apply for a license to practice PT or OT or to register your facility, we cannot complete the licensing process of your application (or renewal), until we have received all of the components required by law (e.g., signed application, affidavits, fees, exam application, etc.). However, once we have the complete application, we will put your license or renewal certificate in the mail within 1-3 working days. We will always give you an update on the status of your application over the phone if you call us and ask.

Enforcement

We are also required to enforce the Physical Therapy and Occupational Therapy Practice Acts.

You may file a formal complaint with us. If you wish to file a complaint against a person or facility regulated by the boards, or against an unlicensed person who you believe has violated any of the laws enforced by the Executive Council, please contact one of our agency investigators at (512) 305-6900. You may also file a complaint by calling the Health Professions Council's toll free number (1-800-821-3205), or by writing to us directly. To help you compose your written complaint, there is a complaint form available for downloading on our web site, but it is not required.

We attempt to resolve all complaints within six months, and have most of them completed within 90 days. We come close to that goal, but more complex cases may take us longer. The investigator assigned to your case will send you a written response to your complaint within ten working days. While the investigation is ongoing, the investigator will update you every 90 days in writing on the status of our investigation and again upon final disposition of the case.

Assistance

A major priority for the agency is to consistently provide a complete and timely response to all questions and concerns about the Executive Council and the two boards, general practice questions, information on persons or businesses we license and register in Texas, and other related services.

We strive to make information about the legal practice of physical therapy and occupational therapy widely available, both to the public and to our licensees, by maintaining updated information on the agency website, by school presentations to students preparing to take national licensure exams, and by responding to all questions from the public and our licensees. We try to demonstrate through our actions that we consider this an important task, and we budget the time and resources for it. We encourage and welcome suggestions, requests and feedback from all individuals. We are committed to customer satisfaction, and will strive to improve our performance as needed. We promise you a prompt response if you contact us with an inquiry or concern. Our standards are:

● If you call us by phone during our normal work hours of 8-5, M-F, you can always expect to talk to a live human being. Since we are a small agency, we may have to put you on hold for a short period of time, or ask you to leave a message for the staff person who can best help you.

- If you send us an e-mail at ecptote@ptot.texas.gov or leave a message in a voice message mail box, unless the recipient of your message is physically unable to respond, we will contact you within 24 hours.

- If you file a written complaint about the service you did (or did not) receive from agency staff, you will receive at a minimum a written response from the Executive Director within 10 calendar days from its receipt in our offices.

- If you request information in accordance with the Texas Public Information Act, we will provide you the information as soon as reasonably possible and without delay.

You can get in touch with us in person at the Executive Council offices located in Room 510, Tower II, William P. Hobby, Jr. State Office Building, 3rd and Guadalupe Streets, Austin, Texas. You can reach us by mail at ECPTOTE, 333 Guadalupe, Suite 2-510, Austin, Texas 78701; by phone at (512) 305-6900; by fax at (512) 305-6951, or by email at ecptote@ptot.texas.gov. Whichever way you contact us, we will ensure that you reach the most qualified employee available to help you.

While all staff members of the Executive Council serve the public, the position of agency customer relations representative is held by John Maline, the Executive Director. If you contact our agency with a problem or request for service, and you are not satisfied with the response you get, you should immediately contact him through any of the means listed above or by e-mail at John.Maline@ptot.texas.gov.